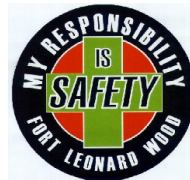




Safety Alert 05-03

SUICIDE PREVENTION



31 Dec 2004

Situation

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, nearly 80 Americans take their own lives every day, and young people are especially at risk. The National Center for Health Statistics has ranked suicide as the third leading cause of death for people between 15 to 24 and the second leading cause for those 25 to 34. When you consider that the vast majority of active-duty soldiers are between 17 and 35, those statistics are very significant. Suicides among service members take a statistical leap each year, usually right after the holidays. Separation from family and friends often plays a role. Many people have a natural letdown after spending time with family and friends and enjoying the happy holiday times. This can become a very serious issue if that person has risk factors for suicide. As our personnel return from annual leave and Exodus, we need to keep this in mind and be diligent to watch for any signs that warn of possible suicidal tendencies.

Preventive Measures

To help prevent suicides among our military personnel, civilian employees, and family members, we must all follow the ABCs of successful intervention:

AWARENESS

Suicide prevention begins with peers, "battle buddies," first-line supervisors, and leaders knowing what's happening in the lives of their soldiers, family members, and civilian employees. In most cases, suicides are triggered by the loss of an intimate relationship such as a divorce, separation, break-up of a romantic relationship, the death of a loved one, or a child custody battle. In addition, financial difficulties, facing charges under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, or a pending separation from the service can trigger a suicide.

BECOMING INVOLVED

If you know someone is facing a particular crisis, you need to act before the problem becomes so bad the person considers suicide. It's important for you to recognize the danger signs and reach out to that person, because they might be close to acting.

COMPASSION

It only takes one person to save a life. Caring and understanding are essential to helping a person at risk for suicide. Don't be afraid to get involved. If you don't reach out to the person, they may think that you don't care, which could worsen their feelings of hopelessness and desperation. Sometimes people are afraid to reach out because of differences in rank, age, and gender. In the Army, compassion transcends differences in rank, age, and gender. We are all responsible to watch out for each other.

MANSCEN SAFETY OFFICE